

February 4, 2011

To Families and Guardians of Shaed and Emery Education Campus Students,

In December, DCPS put forth a proposal to close Shaed Education Campus at the end of the 2010-2011 school year and transition students to Emery Education Campus, to be relocated to the Langley building at 101 T St. NE. The relatively low enrollment at Shaed creates staffing inefficiencies and limits our ability to offer a full and comprehensive curriculum, programs, services, and opportunities for all students. While this is an extremely difficult proposal to make, the serious budget challenges faced by DCPS and other city agencies require us to make hard choices about how to best maximize resources to benefit students.

For the past two months my staff and I have been receiving feedback from parents, staff, and community members about this proposal, through in-person meetings, phone calls, written comments, and email exchanges. I have listened to and carefully considered all of the questions and concerns that have been raised, and I feel confident that we have determined ways to effectively address them. **Therefore, I have recommended to Mayor Gray to close Shaed at the end of the 2010-2011 school year and he has accepted my recommendation.**

I know this decision will disappoint some of you, but I believe that over the coming months we can work together to ensure a smooth transition and a positive experience for the Shaed and Emery communities as they join together in the fall. To begin this process, I want to share some information about how we plan to address some of the chief concerns I have heard over the last two months.

Safety Getting to and from School

One of the most frequently expressed concerns has been about students getting to and from school safely, especially for those students who have to cross Rhode Island Avenue to get to Emery. We will be working closely over the coming months with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to identify preferred walking routes and public transportation routes, based on traffic and where students are coming from. This work may require moving or adding crossing guards and adjusting pedestrian crossings as needed.

Class Sizes

While DCPS is not financially able to sustain the very small class sizes of under 15 students that were in place in some grades at Shaed, the budget at Emery will be increased to accommodate additional students and will allow the school to hire additional staff. As such, students will be in classes with sizes that are appropriate for their grade level.

Providing Students with an Enhanced Facility

The Langley building will offer an appropriate facility for a PS-8 campus that focuses on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It includes two gyms, an auditorium, science labs,

and sufficient space to allow difference grade levels of students to have their own space. For example, early childhood students will be in a separate area of the building from older students.

Preference in the Out-of-Boundary Lottery

We are aware that some parents may wish to choose another school option for their child as a result of this decision. All current Shaed students will receive a preference in the DCPS out-of-boundary lottery. This will provide families with an enhanced opportunity to gain admission to an out-of-boundary school if they choose. The out-of-boundary application period is from January 28th to February 28th. The application will be on the DCPS website, and there is no advantage to applying early in the process.

Planning for the Transition

As we move forward, we will be working very closely with both school communities to determine how to make this transition as smooth as possible for students, families, staff, and community. Together we will identify the strong programs and traditions at Shaed that we want to ensure are part of the new school. We will establish a transition team with members of both school communities to work collaboratively to identify and address potential challenges with support from both school leaders and the DCPS central office. If you would like to participate in this process, please indicate your interest to Principal Taylor or Principal Moore. These meetings will begin in February.

I know that this type of change is very hard and I understand that some people will be upset by this decision as Shaed is an important part of its community. I strongly believe that this decision is in the best interest of children and will enhance the educational outcomes for students in both school communities. My staff and I are committed to supporting you through this process and ensuring a positive experience for students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kaya Henderson", followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

Kaya Henderson
Interim Chancellor